



Transportation Synthesis Report

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Environmental Justice in Transportation Best Practices for Involvement of Disadvantaged Populations

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Division of Transportation Districts

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Transportation Synthesis Reports (TSRs) are brief summaries of currently available information on topics of interest to WisDOT technical staff in highway development, construction and operations. Online and print sources include NCHRP and other TRB programs, AASHTO, the research and practices of other state DOTs, and related academic and industry research. Internet hyperlinks in TSRs are active at the time of publication, but changes on the host server can make them obsolete.

Request for Report

USDOT's *Order to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations* addresses the requirements of Executive Order 12898 (Clinton, 1994b and 1994c) and sets forth DOT's policy to promote the principles of environmental justice in all programs, policies and activities under its jurisdiction. In the time since the USDOT order was issued in 1997, FHWA and FTA have been working with their state and local transportation partners to ensure that the principles of environmental justice are integrated into every aspect of their mission¹.

¹*Environmental justice- Environmental justice in the Department of Transportation*, WisDOT Plans & Projects:
<http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/projects/env/justice/index.htm>.

In Wisconsin, WisDOT's vigorous support for the transportation environmental justice agenda was evidenced in the February 2003 Environmental Justice Conference. This full-day workshop, sponsored by the department, was held to help build a better understanding of the environmental justice process in southeastern Wisconsin, targeting community action groups, minority chambers of commerce, neighborhood organizations, low-income advocacy groups and other populations.²

²*Environmental justice: All voices build better transportation solutions*, WisDOT Plans & Projects:
<http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/projects/env/justice/conference.htm>.

Transportation District 2 has asked the RD&T Program to assist in locating best practices for involving disadvantaged populations – the elderly, the disabled, and ethnic minorities – in the transportation planning process. In particular, the district is interested in case studies of creative strategies other states are using to 1) interest disadvantaged persons in attending a first meeting, and 2) sustaining their interest and keeping them involved in planning.

Summary

The FHWA Environmental Justice Web site (<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/ej2.htm>) is a comprehensive source of information about transportation environmental justice providing links to background, case studies, training opportunities and contacts. The Case Studies link accesses reports from 10 projects describing how various transportation agencies have integrated environmental justice considerations in their activities. We highlight three of the **Cases** below (one from Wisconsin) that demonstrate creative strategies transportation staff have used to invite and maintain the participation of African American, low-income populations and others in planning, including:

- * Conducting neighborhood “walkabouts” to show that planners are accessible;
- * Dining at the local cafe to get acquainted with residents, their culture and their issues;

* Asking local ministers to announce upcoming workshops from the pulpit.
We also cite a case study presented during TRB's 2001 Conference on the Application of Transportation Planning Methods that describes public relations methods used to reach a largely Spanish-speaking population.

Additional public involvement **Practices** being used by transportation organizations include:

- Taking the message to community forums that are already in place, rather than convening separate meetings. If a separate meeting is necessary, endeavor to:
 - * Schedule it to coincide with other events that reach the target community.
 - * Hold it in a venue familiar to the potentially affected population and in or near that community. Familiar and accessible surroundings promote attendance and participation. The location should be in close proximity to public transit service and ADA accessible. Consider providing accommodations for the hearing-impaired.
- Attending and actively participating in local community events such as neighborhood association meetings, faith-based functions, festivals and school carnivals.
- Placing staffed, temporary information booths at convenient locations.

We also located reports of public involvement **Studies** sponsored by FTA and the National Transportation Center at Morgan State University that may be of interest. The FTA study – “Livable Communities Initiative – Public Participation and Outreach” – is examining and identifying public involvement programs that provide a wider range of participatory opportunities for community interest and ethnic groups. The NTC study – “Enhancement of Public Involvement in Transportation Planning” – was completed in 2000, and provides an assessment of the transportation needs of the Park Heights area of Baltimore City (99 percent African American, as of 1990) and a strategic plan focusing on citizen participation in possible transportation-related facilities:

- “Any plan of a sponsoring agency (like the Baltimore Metropolitan Council) involving public participation must begin with the initial step of making contact with community leaders to explain fully the sponsoring agency’s plans for the neighborhood with respect to transportation facilities, and the agency’s ideas for implementing these plans in the community in general as well as vis-à-vis various internal constituencies.”

The FHWA site mentioned above also provides links to guidance publications, training courses and other **Resources** that address effective practices for outreach and public involvement. Gloria Shepherd, Director of FHWA’s Environmental Justice Office of Planning, was happy to field our follow-up questions about FHWA’s resources. Gloria may be reached by phone at 202-366-0106, or by e-mail at gloria.shepherd@fhwa.dot.gov.

Cases

FHWA

Environmental Justice Case Studies

<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/ejustice/case/index.htm>.

The studies presented at this site detail analytical and procedural issues relevant to a diverse community including FHWA, state DOTs, MPOs, transit providers, community organizations, environmental interest and environmental justice advocacy groups, and businesses.

Entries include:

- Verona Road and West Beltline Needs Assessment Study, Madison, Wisconsin
<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/ejustice/case/case1.htm>.
WisDOT initiated a needs assessment study process focusing on two heavily used arterials in Madison. The study examined how the two corridors presently served traffic and how they could be expected to serve traffic in 2020. A predominantly minority community is located adjacent to the study area and is isolated from the rest of Madison by several major road corridors, including those that are the focus of the study. Project strategy included community meetings, workshops, neighborhood open houses and other efforts to involve all stakeholders as a means of addressing the segregation of neighborhoods by major highways. Innovative practices included involvement of youth in the identification of pedestrian and bicycle needs and the use of a community workshop (charrette) using a format typically used for land-use planning and visioning.
- South Park Avenue Improvement Project, Tucson, Arizona
<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/ejustice/case/case8.htm>.
The South Park area is a low-income, minority community originally settled by African Americans during the 1940s. From 1995 through 1999, the Tucson Department of Transportation (TDOT) worked with

residents and businesses in the South Park neighborhood to plan and implement a series of improvements that included increased transit and improved pedestrian and bicycle safety and accessibility. During 1996 and 1997, TDOT held a series of town hall meetings to gain public input on the project's design. Attendance was poor, and TDOT resolved to become more aggressive in its outreach efforts. Neighborhood "walkabouts" were held to show the community that the project and people working on it were real and accessible. Project staff members walked through neighborhood streets and parks, introducing themselves to residents in a personal, informal context. TDOT also conducted in-home interviews with several respected elders in the South Park community. Within months, participation at the town hall forums increased to more than 40 individuals. Residents were invited to "view and vote" on design mock-ups of bus shelter placements, crosswalks and other pedestrian facilities, and public art components of the project. The effect was a continually evolving project design that reflected ongoing community input.

- South Carolina 72 Environmental Assessment, Calhoun Falls, South Carolina
<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/ejustice/case/case10.htm>.
Notices and articles in local newspapers, on posters and in newsletters publicized the first series of public involvement workshops. The posters were hung in the windows of shops and businesses and in other high-traffic areas, including near the trash dumpsters at the regional sites where county residents brought their trash. The newsletter centerfold showed the six project design alternatives superimposed on an aerial photograph of the town. A letter of the alphabet and a color identified each of the alternatives. Packets of newsletters and posters were sent to local ministers, who were asked to make announcements from their pulpits on the Sunday before the scheduled public involvement workshops. Informal discussions with local residents provided crucial details for some of the field studies: during the week spent in the area, the project team ate breakfast at the Kuntry Kitchen, a one-room, mom-and-pop eatery where mill workers stopped for coffee.

Public Involvement Plan for the Kelly Parkway Corridor Study

R.J. Rivera and R.W. Jackson: Eighth TRB Conference on the Application of Transportation Planning Methods, April 2001, pages 132-137. (Hard copy attached.)

For a nine-mile highway project in San Antonio, TxDOT used a Web site and a variety of community-sensitive public relations methods to reach a largely Spanish-speaking population.

Practices

Connecticut

Environmental Justice and CRCOG's Transportation Planning Program

<http://www.crcog.org/Publications/Transportation%20Other/E%20J/EJ%20case%20study%20-%20Hartford.pdf>.

In early 2001, the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) was one of four agencies in the country selected to participate in a federal Environmental Justice Challenge Grant program. CRCOG set objectives that included community involvement.

Scroll to table on page 8- Conclusions: How to Better Involve Minority and Low-Income Communities. Methodologies are outlined for expanded outreach for special studies, expanded outreach for basic planning activities, and more effective input to core decision making.

Louisiana

G. Strasburg: *A Study in Environmental Justice*

Public Roads, September/October 2003

<http://www.tfhrc.gov/pubrds/03sep/08.htm>.

Scroll to: Meetings and Other Outreach Tools

Although calling meetings is often necessary, the New Orleans Regional Planning Commission tends to avoid convening its own meetings and attempts rather to take its message to community forums that are already taking place. In this way the public can find out about plans and projects as well as communicate needs. If the NORPC must hold a separate meeting, it tries to do so in a venue familiar to the potentially affected population and in or near that community. Familiar and accessible surroundings promote both attendance and participation. To supplement meetings, the NORPC uses the print media, newsletters and direct mail to reach individuals who could not attend meetings and to provide feedback on meeting outcomes to those who did.

Minnesota

Mn/DOT- *Hear Every Voice: A Guide to Public Involvement at Mn/DOT*

<http://www.dot.state.mn.us/pubinvolve/partner.html>.

This FHWA-approved guide includes the following appendix:

- *Methods and Approaches to Enhance Involvement in Non-Traditional Transportation Stakeholder Communities and Neighborhoods* (<http://www.dot.state.mn.us/pubinvolve/pdf/nontrad20.pdf>). This handbook was prepared as a product of Mn/DOT's Non-Traditional Transportation Stakeholder Dialogue Project conducted in 1995 and 1996. Non-traditional transportation stakeholders were defined as people of color, low-income constituencies, communities, neighborhood-based organizations, disabled individuals and civic and cultural groups. The purposes of the project were to:
 - * Identify non-traditional transportation stakeholder groups in the Twin Cities metropolitan area.
 - * Build better relationships with non-traditional transportation stakeholders.
 - * Invite those groups to become involved in Mn/DOT's public participation processes.
- Create a forum for dialogue and two-way learning so that: 1) Mn/DOT is better prepared to develop and facilitate effective involvement processes that reach out to non-traditional stakeholders, and 2) non-traditional stakeholders are better prepared to effectively participate in planning and project design processes.

New Jersey

Environmental Justice Final Report- June 2002

South Jersey Transportation Planning Organization (SJTPO)

Chapter 8- Recommended Strategies and Actions

<http://sjtpo.org/ejchapter8.pdf>.

Scroll to: 8.1- Public Involvement and Community Outreach

The following actions can be taken to help the SJTPO effectively reach out, educate and involve minority and low-income populations in its future activities:

[Nos. 2 through 4 in a series of 5]

- * Attend and actively participate in local community events such as neighborhood association meetings, faith-based functions, festivals and school carnivals.
- * Solicit the participation of community-based organizations (such as churches and social service providers) in the transportation decision-making process.
- * Conduct outreach efforts at non-traditional meeting places such as shopping malls, workforce investment boards or one-stop career centers, religious institutions, senior center complexes, community centers, or local community colleges or schools.

North Carolina

Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO)

Public Involvement Process

<http://www.raleigh-nc.org/campo/00426A7.HTM>.

Scroll to: 2. Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)

b. (The LRTP public involvement plan shall consider) Special outreach to low-income and minority populations within the Capital Area MPO that will include a list of church, business and community leaders in areas with incomes one standard deviation below the CAMPO average and minority populations one standard deviation above the CAMPO average.

Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana

OKI Regional Council of Governments

2030 Transportation Plan

Chapter 2: Public Involvement

<http://www.oki.org/transportation/2030plan/chapter02.pdf>.

Scroll to: page 2-4

Outreach to target (environmental justice) populations has included the following:

- * Working with advisers who are familiar and active in the EJ community and familiar with effective methods for engaging the EJ community.
- * Contacting relevant civic and professional organizations that represent the EJ community to solicit their help in actively engaging their constituents.

- * Distributing information in the form of flyers, brochures, newsletters, notices at grocery and popular retail locations where the EJ community lives and works.
- * Publicizing meeting times and locations via paid advertising and non-paid coverage in local media that reach the EJ community.
- * Providing meetings at locations in close proximity to public transit service and that are ADA accessible. When possible, meetings are scheduled which coincide with other events that reach the EJ community.

Washington, D.C.

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
Public Involvement Process

<http://www.mwcog.org/transportation/involved/process.asp>.

Scroll to: Specific Activities

The Transportation Planning Board will carry out the following specific activities in support of the above (public involvement) policy statement and general requirements and criteria:

From No. 5 [in a series of 11] ...Identify opportunities to provide information to the public on regional transportation plans, programs and issues, including placing staffed, temporary information booths at convenient locations.

Washington State

Benton-Franklin Regional Council of Governments (BFCG)

<http://www.benton-franklin.cog.wa.us/Public%20Involvement%20Procedures.pdf>

Public Involvement Procedures for Transportation Planning.

Scroll to: page 4- Special Considerations

Where feasible, public meetings hosted by BFCG are situated in facilities accessible to the handicapped and to people who rely on public transit. Dial-A-Ride service is available in both Walla Walla and the Tri-Cities to facilitate travel needs of the handicapped. When needed and requested, special accommodations will be made for the hearing impaired. Consideration is also given to the needs of the underserved population (low income, minorities etc.). The intent is that all segments of the population have equal opportunities to be involved in the planning process.

Studies

Livable Communities Initiative – Public Participation and Outreach

FTA- Research in Progress

<http://rip.trb.org/browse/dproject.asp?n=1806>.

The research will examine and identify public involvement programs that provide a wider range of participatory opportunities for community interest and ethnic groups, namely, those groups that have had limited involvement in the planning and design of transit facilities and services that directly affect the environment and quality of life in their communities.

Park Heights Community Project: Enhancement of Public Involvement in Transportation Planning

M. St. Pierre, for National Transportation Center, Morgan State University, April 2000

<http://www.eng.morgan.edu/~ntc/St.%20Pierre%20final.PDF>.

The purpose of this study is to 1) provide an assessment of the transportation needs of the Park Heights area of Baltimore City (99 percent African American, as of 1990) and 2) generate a strategic plan focusing on citizen participation in possible transportation-related facilities.

Scroll to page 36: Dynamics

Any plan of a sponsoring agency (like the Baltimore Metropolitan Council) involving public participation must begin with the initial step of making contact with community leaders to explain fully the following:

- * The sponsoring agency's plans for the neighborhood with respect to transportation facilities;
- * The sponsoring agency's ideas for implementing these plans in the community in general, as well as vis-à-vis various internal constituencies (such as interest groups, community organizations, churches, single mothers, senior citizens, the homeless, the transport-dependent, welfare recipients etc.) in particular.

To allay suspicions with respect to the agenda of the sponsoring agency, the following questions, as much as is feasible, should be fully addressed:

- * What is the project all about?
- * Why is the information being collected about transportation?
- * What transportation services, if any, will be provided? If they will be, why? If not, why not?
- * Who will benefit from any transportation services provided?
- * Why has the area been chosen?

Strategies used to disseminate information might include: open houses, toll-free telephones, public fairs and forums, public comment sheets, speaker bureaus, notification signs, bulletin boards in supermarkets and suggestion boxes in churches. Other relevant settings that might be used for public participation and the dissemination of information regarding transportation would include parks, street corners, bus stops, the train station, barbershops, hair salons and fast food restaurants.

Additional techniques for information dissemination might include:

- * Photo novella (i.e., people's photographic documentation of their everyday lives).
- * Theater and visual imagery for the purpose of consciousness raising and to facilitate collective learning, expression and action (i.e., written songs, cartoons, community self-portraits and videotaped recordings). The youth could be used to great effect here.
- * Development of linkages, exploring real commitments, and creating a vision of self-actualization.

Resources

Pertinent NHI training courses

Flexible scheduling- note minimum/maximum class size requirements.

- <http://www.nhi.fhwa.dot.gov/download/catalog/142XXX.pdf>
Scroll to page:
101 – NEPA and Transportation Decision Making;
103 – Public Involvement in the Transportation Decision-Making Process;
104 – Fundamentals of Title VI/Environmental Justice.
- <http://www.nhi.fhwa.dot.gov/coursefhwa.asp?coursenum=259>
Preventing Discrimination in the Federal-Aid Program: A Systematic Interdisciplinary Approach.

Public Involvement Techniques for Transportation Decision-Making

FHWA. Chapter 1.B.: Including People Who are Underserved by Transportation

<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/reports/pittd/bridge1b.htm>.

Techniques to reach the underserved are grouped under two headings: “ethnic, minority, and low-income groups”; and “Americans with disabilities.”

TR News

Going Public: Involving Communities in Transportation Decisions

May/June 2002

<http://gulliver.trb.org/publications/trnews/trnews220.pdf>.

This issue is devoted to best practices and new approaches for public involvement in transportation. The articles provide a sampling of ideas and techniques in use by practitioners in all phases of transportation projects. Pages 25 through 34 focus on minorities and low-income populations.